

Presenter: Deidre Berger, American Jewish Committee

Title: “**Critical Responses to the German Expert Commission on Antisemitism**”

Panel: Contemporary History

The German Parliament’s expert report on anti-Semitism, issued in April 2018, delivered important recommendations to strengthen counter-measures within government, educational and research institutions, as well as providing a large-scale study of concerns within the Jewish community regarding anti-Semitism. Among other suggestions, the report included an endorsement of a long-standing recommendation from NGOs to institute a National Commissioner on Anti-Semitism Affairs, a position that is likely to be created in the next German government. However, there has also been criticism of the report, with critics charging that sections on some subjects are misleading, in particular on the controversial issue of the extent of anti-Semitism amongst portions of the Muslim community. There are questions about the design and findings of a study commissioned by the expert group on attitudes of Imams towards anti-Semitism, which concludes that anti-Semitism amongst Muslims is largely an issue of criticism of Israel and of discrimination against Muslims. Critical concerns have also been raised about the hesitancy of the panel of experts to embrace fully the Working Definition of Antisemitism. The Working Definition nonetheless was adopted in September 2017 by the German cabinet. At its outset, the commission was criticized for the lack of inclusion of Jewish experts, a situation that was altered following significant public pressure. Nonetheless, discrepancies in the findings of the report to positions widespread within the Jewish and pro-Israel world raises questions of the role of Jewish perspectives in the fight against anti-Semitism.